

Aruba's ONLY English newspaper

Push to reopen schools could leave out millions of students

By GEOFF MULVIHILL, ADRIAN SAINZ and MICHAEL KUNZELMAN

Associated Press

President Joe Biden says he wants most schools serving kindergarten through eighth grade to reopen by late April, but even if that happens, it is likely to leave out millions of students, many of them minorities in urban areas.

"We're going to see kids fall further and further behind, particularly low-income students of color," said Shavar Jeffries, president of Democrats for Education Reform. "There's potentially a generational level of harm that students have suffered from being out of school for so long."

Like some other officials and education advocates, Jeffries said powerful

teachers unions are standing in the way of bringing back students. The unions insist they are acting to protect teachers and students and their families.

In a call Thursday evening with teachers unions, Dr. Anthony Fauci, the federal government's top infectious disease expert, said the reopening of K-8 classrooms nationally might not be possible on Biden's time frame. He cited concern over new variants of the virus that allow it to spread more quickly and may be more resistant to vaccines. Biden is asking for \$130 billion for schools to address concerns by unions and school officials as part of a broader coronavirus relief package that faces an uncertain fate in Congress.

Continued on next page



In this Jan. 11, 2021 file photo, pre-kindergarten teacher Sarah McCarthy works with a student at Dawes Elementary in Chicago.

Associated Press



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Continued from Front

If his reopening goal is realized, millions of students might still have to keep learning from home, possibly for the rest of the school year.

California was an epicenter of infection in the first part of January, and public health officials say many of the state's districts are in areas where transmission remains too high to reopen. But a statewide group called Open Schools California is pushing for reopening as soon as public health standards are met.

"I think that data will bear out that the children who have been most disadvantaged are going to be low-income children, Black and brown children, children with special education, learning differences, homeless and foster youth," said Megan Bacigalupi, a mother of students in the Oakland public schools and one of the organizers. It's hard to tally exactly how many schools are open in person now because of the size and diffuse nature of the nation's school system — and because districts' approaches change frequently.

By early January, about a



In this Oct. 6, 2020, file photo, Christine Free teaches a remote music class during the coronavirus outbreak at the Osborn School in Rye, N.Y.

Associated Press

third of students in a sample of 1,200 U.S. school districts were in schools where classes had been held exclusively online since last March — many of them in cities. By last week, more than half of students were enrolled in schools where in-person learning was at least an option, according to Burbio, a data service tracking school-opening policies.

For the first time since shuttering schools in March, Atlanta began returning the youngest and special education students to some in-person learning last week. Other districts planning to reopen by early March in-

clude Clark County, Nevada, which includes Las Vegas; Kansas City, Missouri; Boston and the big Ohio school systems.

Younger students in New York City already have the option to attend school in-person. Mayor Bill de Blasio said Friday that he expects middle school and high school students back in some capacity later this school year.

Jeffries acknowledges that there are reasons it's harder to open schools in cities: They're more densely populated, meaning the virus can spread faster; more people rely on public transportation, a potential

hot spot for contamination; and more parents have front-line jobs that could expose them, and, in turn, their children, to the virus.

But he said the major obstacle to reopening city schools is political. "The teachers unions tend to be pretty obstinately opposed to going back to school," Jeffries said.

In Chicago, only prekindergartners have been in school so far. This week, the Chicago Teachers Union voted to teach online only in a showdown with the district over plans to bring students to school starting Feb. 1. The union has authorized a strike if school officials retaliate, but negotiations are continuing.

Claiborne Wade, 31, has three children in the Chicago Public Schools system, ages 10, 9 and 7. Wade believes the district is not quite ready to reopen schools, and he favors distance learning for now.

Even so, he said minority students in large urban districts have fewer resources for online learning. He's seen students from more affluent schools get a laptop and a tablet, and even a desk, while his kids only have a laptop to work with. Having both a laptop and tablet helps because the students can see their teacher on one screen and follow along with instruction materials on another, he said.

"It's been going on for years, even before the pandemic hit," he said. "We've always been at the bottom of the totem pole, in receiving resources that we need."

Public health officials increasingly say that virus transmissions in schools are low, so long as measures such as mask-wearing and social distancing are in place — even if teachers and other school staff have not received vaccinations. On Jan. 21, Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan, a Republican, declared: "There is no public health reason for school boards to be keeping students out of school. None."

This past week, Maryland State Education Association President Cheryl Bost wrote to Hogan, saying his statement "would be laughable if it were not so

dangerous." She said the coronavirus is not predictable and that dangers are heightened with the spread of new mutations. Infection risks increase when people gather indoors for long periods.

Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers, said it could be safe to return to schools in the spring semester with rigorous testing programs in place and the option for students and educators to remain online if they choose to.

"Teachers know how important in-person instruction is, but we have to make it safe. Testing and vaccination, as well as masking and distancing, are crucial, as are accommodations for educators at risk," she said in a statement last week.

Keith Benson, president of the Camden Education Association, which represents teachers in a New Jersey city with a long history of poverty, crime and high dropout rates, said conditions are different in the city than outside it. The schools there plan to keep buildings closed until at least April.

"What keeps someone safe in a suburban area is not the same thing that would keep folks safe here," Benson said, adding that while remote learning is not ideal, he believes students will be able to catch up eventually.

Dr. Lavanya Sithanandam, a pediatrician who practices in the Maryland suburbs of Washington, said she has seen a record number of children and teenagers with mental health issues since online learning began in her area more than 10 months ago.

"Initially, many physicians, including myself, were very hesitant about kids returning to school," she said. "But as the data evolved, many of us have realized that school reopening is incredibly important."

Most of her patients are children from lower-income minority families. She said students she sees from private schools where classes are being held in person tend to fare better than their public school peers in terms of mental health. □

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GOP lawmakers urge Biden to meet with them on virus relief

By AAMER MADHANI

WASHINGTON (AP) — Ten Republican senators on Sunday proposed spending about one-third of what President Joe Biden is seeking in coronavirus aid and urged him to negotiate rather than try to ram through his \$1.9 trillion package solely on Democratic votes. In challenging Biden to fulfill his pledge of unity, the group said in a letter that their counterproposal will include \$160 billion for vaccines, testing, treatment and personal protective equipment and will call for more targeted relief than Biden's plan to issue \$1,400 stimulus checks for most Americans.

Winning the support of 10 Republicans would be significant for Biden in the 50-50 Senate where Vice President Kamala Harris is the tie-breaker. If all Democrats were to back an eventual compromise bill, the legislation would reach the 60-vote threshold necessary to overcome potential blocking efforts and pass under regular Senate procedures. "In the spirit of bipartisanship and unity, we have developed a COVID-19 relief framework that builds on prior COVID assistance laws, all of which passed with bipartisan support,"



In this Jan. 19, 2021 file photo, Sen. Rob Portman, R-Ohio, speaks to members of the media outside a Senate Finance Committee hearing on Capitol Hill in Washington.

Associated Press

the Republican senators wrote. "Our proposal reflects many of your stated priorities, and with your support, we believe that this plan could be approved quickly by Congress with bipartisan support."

The plea for Biden to give bipartisan negotiations more time comes as the president has shown signs of impatience as the more liberal wing of his party considers passing the relief package through a process known as budget

reconciliation. That would allow the bill to advance with only the backing of his Democratic majority.

The Republicans did not provide many details of their proposal. One of the signatories, Louisiana Sen. Bill Cassidy, said that it would cost about \$600 billion.

"If you can't find bipartisan compromise on COVID-19, I don't know where you can find it," said Ohio Sen. Rob Portman, who also signed the letter.

The other GOP senators are Susan Collins of Maine, Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, Mitt Romney of Utah, Shelley Moore Capito of West Virginia, Todd Young of Indiana, Jerry Moran of Kansas, Mike Rounds of South Dakota, and Thom Tillis of North Carolina.

Brian Deese, the top White House economic adviser who is leading the administration's outreach to Congress, said administration officials were reviewing the letter. He did not immedi-

ately commit to a Biden meeting with the lawmakers.

But Cedric Richmond, a senior Biden adviser, said the president "is very willing to meet with anyone to advance the agenda." When asked about the senators' plan, Richmond said, "this is about seriousness of purpose."

Deese indicated the White House could be open to negotiating on further limiting who would receive stimulus checks. Portman suggested the checks should go to individuals who make no more than \$50,000 per year and families capped at \$100,000 per year.

Under the Biden plan, families with incomes up to \$300,000 could receive some stimulus money.

"That is certainly a place that we're willing to sit down and think about, are there ways to make the entire package more effective?" Deese said.

As a candidate, Biden predicted his decades in the Senate and his eight years as Barack Obama's vice president gave him credibility as a deal-maker and would help him bring Republicans and Democrats to consensus on the most important matters facing the country. □

Creator of 'Bernie' mittens partners with teddy bear maker

By KATHY McCORMACK

Associated Press

The teacher who created the recycled wool mittens that U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders wore to the presidential inauguration — engendering countless memes — is partnering with the Vermont Teddy Bear Company to create a whole mitten line to meet soaring demand, with some of the proceeds going to Make-A-Wish Vermont.

"I can't be more thrilled, because I personally can't make 18,000 pairs of mittens," Jen Ellis said Saturday, estimating how many people have contacted her. "Everybody will get their mittens — everybody." Ellis, a Vermont elementary school teacher who has a

side business making mittens out of recycled wool, gave Sanders a pair as a gift, and he wore them to President Joe Biden's inauguration. His fashion look, also featuring a winter jacket made by Burton Snowboards, sparked countless memes prompted by the photo taken by Agence France-Presse: The former presidential candidate could be found on social media timelines taking a seat on the subway, the moon and the couch with the cast of "Friends," among other creative locales.

Sanders raised at least \$1.8 million in merchandise for charities stemming from the Jan. 20 image of him seated with his arms and legs crossed, clad in his brown

parka and the recycled wool mittens. Sanders put out so-called "Chairman Sanders" merchandise, including T-shirts, sweatshirts and stickers, on his campaign website.

Vermont Teddy Bear, which makes handcrafted bears for all occasions, including a Bernie one, reached out to Ellis to see if she'd be interested in partnering.

"Jen is going to work hand-in-hand — mitten-in-hand — with each one of our designers" to ensure that the 'Bernie mitten' design in multiple patterns is produced in a way that meets her standards of quality, said Hayes McCarthy, vice president of product innovation, brand creative and consumer experience.

"We're excited to be in the mittens category."

It's not clear when the first mittens would be available for purchase. Those interested in getting a pair can leave an email at the company's website.

In the past, Vermont Teddy Bear has made special bears to raise money for Make-A-Wish Vermont, and recently gave office space to the organization for \$1 a year, said James Hathaway, president and CEO of Make-A-Wish Vermont. Hathaway said the charity lost \$250,000 in revenue during the pandemic.

"We are so grateful to Vermont Teddy Bear, Jen, and of course to Bernie for being so Bernie," Hathaway said in a statement. □



In this Jan. 20, 2021 file photo, Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., wears mittens as he attends President Joe Biden's inauguration ceremony at the U.S. Capitol in Washington.

Associated Press

Lawmakers push mental health days for kids amid pandemic

By SOPHIA EPPOLITO
Associated Press/Report for America

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) —

When she was growing up, Sophie Corroon struggled to get through a ballet class or soccer tryout without having an anxiety attack.

The idea of going to sleepovers or being home alone left her feeling panicked. Corroon's anxiety grew even more during high school in Salt Lake City, when the pressures of getting into college left her in tears at school or toiling for hours on assignments.

Corroon, now 20, has struggled with her mental health since fourth grade, and she's not alone. And now, the coronavirus pandemic has multiplied the pressures on kids — many have spent almost a year doing remote learning, isolated from their friends and classmates. The portion of children's emergency-room visits related to mental health was 44% higher in 2020, compared with the year before.

State lawmakers are increasingly seeking more support for kids. This year, legislation proposed in Utah and Arizona would add mental or behavioral health to the list of reasons students can be absent from class, similar to staying out with a physical illness. Similar laws have passed in



Sophie Corroon, a sophomore at the University of Washington, poses for a photo on the school's campus Monday, Jan. 25, 2021, in Seattle.

Associated Press

Oregon, Maine, Colorado and Virginia in the past two years.

Offering mental health days can help children and parents communicate and prevent struggling students from falling behind in school or ending up in crisis, said Debbie Plotnick, vice president of the non-profit advocacy group Mental Health America. Plotnick said mental health days can be even more effective when paired with mental health services in schools.

"We know that this year

has been extra hard, and we know that it's hard for young people," Plotnick said. "That's why it's so essential that students feel comfortable to come forward and say ... 'I need to take some actions to support my mental health.'"

In Arizona, Democratic Sen. Sean Bowie has introduced a mental health day measure for the second time after legislation stalled in March as the pandemic took hold. Republican Gov. Doug Ducey has taken an interest in youth suicide and mental health, and

Bowie said he's confident it will be signed into law. The bill passed the state Senate unanimously Thursday.

Conservative Utah passed a law in 2018 letting kids take time off school for a mental illness. A new proposal from Republican Rep. Mike Winder would allow absences for students to deal with other kinds of mental pressures to further normalize treating a mental health concern like a physical one.

"If a student has a panic attack today, because of some drama going on at

home, that's not mental illness necessarily," Winder said. "But maybe they need that day to catch their breath and maintain their mental health."

Under the Utah bill, which passed out of committee Friday and will move to the House floor, mental health days would be treated like any other excused absence, Winder said. A parent would need to excuse their child, and students would still be expected to make up their schoolwork. In Arizona, specific mental health day policies would be up to each school district, Bowie said.

Theresa Nguyen, a licensed clinical social worker, said she's concerned about the potential long-term mental and academic effects that students may face from the pandemic. In addition to growing reports of anxiety and depression, Nguyen said, many students say they don't feel like they're absorbing class material virtually and they're not getting enough support.

"They feel like, 'Nobody cares that I'm struggling, so I'm basically being communicated to that I need to just deal with it by myself,'" said Nguyen, Mental Health America's chief program officer. "And for a lot of youth, that means increased self-harm and suicide." □

Major storm heads to Northeast after blanketing Midwest



"Rosie" runs in the snow on the National Mall in front of the U.S. Capitol, Sunday, Jan. 31, 2021, in Washington.

Associated Press

By The Associated Press
After days of frigid tem-

peratures, the Northeast braced for a whopper of a

storm that could dump well over a foot of snow in many areas, create blizzard-like conditions and cause travel problems for the next few days.

The storm system blanketed parts of the Midwest in the most snow some places had seen in several years. Chicago got almost 7 inches of snow by Sunday morning, leading to the cancellation of a couple hundred flights at the city's two airports. In Wisconsin, snow depths in some counties near Lake Michigan had reached more than 15 inches, and the snow was still falling.

"That's more snow than

we've seen in a decade," Chris Stumpf, meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Sullivan, Wisconsin, told the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel.

Three to 5 inches of snow arrived in central Ohio by early Sunday, making for some slippery roads. Washington, D.C., and parts of Virginia had also received some snow, with up to 3 inches in some areas. By the afternoon, the snow was expected to reach Pennsylvania.

Heavy snow falling at an inch to 3 inches an hour was forecast for Monday in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut, the Nation-

al Weather Service said. Much of the region could see blizzard-like conditions, with a foot to 18 inches of snow. Temperatures were expected to be in the upper 20s to lower 30s for the New York City metro area. The snow was expected to start falling in Massachusetts on Monday morning, bringing up to a foot of snow to impact the evening commute. The storm will reach northern New England later that night, meteorologists said.

Winds strong enough to bring down tree branches with gusts ranging from 35 to 50 mph were forecast for the storm. □

Thousands flee Hong Kong for UK, fearing China crackdown

By ZEN SOO and SYLVIA HUI
Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Thousands of Hong Kongers have already made the sometimes painful decision to leave behind their hometown and move to Britain since Beijing imposed a strict national security law on the Chinese territory last summer. Their numbers are expected to swell to the hundreds of thousands.

Some are leaving because they fear punishment for supporting the pro-democracy protests that swept the former British colony in 2019. Others say China's encroachment on their way of life and civil liberties has become unbearable, and they want to seek a better future for their children abroad. Most say they don't plan to ever go back. The moves are expected to accelerate now that 5 million Hong Kongers are eligible to apply for visas to Britain, allowing them to live, work and study there and eventually apply to become British citizens. Applications for the British National Overseas visa officially opened Sunday, though many have already arrived on British soil to get a head start.

Britain's government said some 7,000 people with British National Overseas passports — a travel docu-



In this July 7, 2019, file photo, thousands of protesters carrying the British flag march near the harbor of Hong Kong.

ment that Hong Kongers could apply for before the city was handed over to Chinese control in 1997 — have arrived since July on the previously allowed six month visa. It estimates that over 300,000 people will take up the offer of extended residency rights in the next five years.

"Before the announcement of the BN(O) visa in July, we didn't have many enquiries about U.K. immigration, maybe less than 10 a month," said Andrew Lo,

founder of Anlex Immigration Consultants in Hong Kong. "Now we receive about 10 to 15 calls a day asking about it."

Mike, a photojournalist, said he plans to apply for the visa and move to Leeds with his wife and young daughter in April.

His motivation to leave Hong Kong came after the city's political situation deteriorated following the anti-government protests and he realized that the city's police force was not

politically neutral. The police have been criticized by pro-democracy supporters for brutality and the use of excessive violence.

Mike said moving to Britain was important as he believed the education system in Hong Kong will be affected by the political situation and it will be better for his daughter to study in the U.K. Mike agreed to speak on the condition that he only be identified by his first name out of fear of official retaliation.

Lo said that with the new visa, the barrier to entry to move to the U.K. becomes extremely low, with no language or education qualification requirements. British National Overseas passport holders need to prove that they have enough money to support themselves for six months and prove that they are clear of tuberculosis, according to the U.K. government.

Currently, Lo assists three to four families a week in their move to the U.K. About 60% of those are families with young children, while the remaining are young couples or young professionals. Cindy, a Hong Kong businesswoman and the mother of two young children, arrived in London last week. In Hong Kong she had a comfortable lifestyle. She owned several properties with her husband and the business she ran was going well. But she made up her mind to leave it all behind as she felt that the city's freedoms and liberties were eroding and she wanted to ensure a good future for her kids.

Cindy, who spoke on the condition she only be identified by her first name out of concern of official retaliation, said it was important to move quickly as she feared Beijing would soon move to halt the exodus. □

Associated Press

UK police arrest another 9 people at asylum seekers' camp

LONDON (AP) — Police in southeast England said Sunday that they have made a further nine arrests at a former army barracks, which has been used to house hundreds of asylum-seekers and where a suspected arson attack took place.

Kent Police said in a statement that 14 people have now been arrested following a "disturbance" on Friday at the site in the coastal town of Folkestone, which saw windows smashed and a building set alight.

Five men previously arrested in connection with the unrest remain in custody.

One of them, 31-year-old Mohammed Ali, has been charged "with assault by beating, using or threatening unlawful violence and criminal damage." He is due to appear in court on Monday.

Police said no serious injuries were reported as a result of the attack, even though a "significant amount of damage was caused to one part of the site following a fire, which is believed to have been started deliberately."

The fire broke out at the site, where around 400 people have been staying. The barracks has been dogged by accusations

of poor conditions, and at least 120 residents reportedly tested positive for COVID-19 recently.

On Sunday, Britain's Home Office, which oversees asylum applications, is facing allegations from migrant charity Care4Calais that residents remaining at the barracks are living in "freezing cold" conditions and that 100 of them have COVID-19 without a doctor on site. The charity also said there was no hot water to wash with or to make tea, and that it's "essential" that appropriate care is provided. The Home Office said the department is following all guidelines and that



A view of a burnt out accommodation block at Napier Barracks in Folkestone, Kent, England following a fire at the site, Sunday, Jan. 31, 2021.

Associated Press

the barracks are "safe and secure." It also said that power was lost to much of

the site for a time following the fire, but it has now been mostly restored. □

13 killed in car bombs, shooting in northern Syria

BEIRUT (AP) — One Syrian was killed on Sunday and four injured after Kurdish security forces opened fire at pro-government demonstrators in a northeastern city, state media said.

The state news agency SANA said the Kurdish forces opened fire at demonstrators protesting the siege on their neighborhood in Hassakeh city. The area is known as the security square and is controlled by government forces.

Separately, two car bombs went off two hours apart in the northwestern town of Azaz and another village some 50 kilometers (30 miles) away. The explosions in the areas controlled by Syrian opposition fighters allied with Turkey killed six civilians, including one child in Azaz, and six fighters at a checkpoint in a village near the town of al-Bab, first responders known as Syrian Civil Defense and opposition media reported. Turkey and allied Syrian fighters control large parts of northern Syria, and are at odds with government forces and Kurdish-led forc-



In this photo released by the Syrian official news agency SANA, pro-government demonstrators protest the siege on their neighborhood by Kurdish security forces, in Hassakeh, Syria, Sunday, Jan. 31, 2021.

Associated Press

es, who are considered terrorists by Ankara. The opposition-controlled areas are scene of recurrent attacks that are rarely claimed by any one side. The Syrian Civil Defense said it responded to 11 explosions in northwestern Syria since the start of January, before Sunday, where at least 11 people were killed.

A video of the rally in the northeastern city of Hassakeh showed dozens of men gathering in a street on a rainy day as fire rang out over their heads. The men began chanting: "With our souls, our blood we sacrifice for you Bashar," in reference to the Syrian President Bashar Assad. A Kurdish-run news agency,

Hawar, said security forces at a checkpoint in the city had come under fire, prompting its members to respond to the source of fire. The clashes led to the death of a government security member, the agency said. The different accounts could not be immediately reconciled or indepen-

dently verified in the city where both security forces have presence.

The Kurds, Syria's largest ethnic minority, have carved out a semi-autonomous enclave in Syria's north since the start of the civil war in 2011. In the area, they run their own affairs and control most of the country's oil resources.

In both Hassakeh and Qamishli cities, they share control with government forces— which have presence in security zones, near the airport and in some neighborhoods. Both cities have a sizeable Kurdish population.

Tension occasionally erupts between the two sides, but the Kurdish forces have more presence and control there. In recent weeks, Kurdish forces have imposed a siege on government neighborhoods in Hassakeh and to a lesser degree in Qamishli.

In Hassakeh, the Kurdish forces prevented flour from entering the government-controlled areas, forcing bakeries to shut down in the last week. □

Afghan negotiating team warns Taliban it must resume talks



In this Sept. 12, 2020 photo, a Taliban delegation arrive to attend the opening session of the peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban in Doha, Qatar.

Associated Press

By TAMEEM AKHGAR
Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — A member of the Afghan government's peace negotiating team Sunday warned the Taliban that if they don't resume peace talks in Qatar soon, the government could recall

the team before a deal is reached.

Government negotiator Rasul Talib said in a news conference the team is waiting for the return of the Taliban leadership to Doha, where a second round of peace talks began this month but have made little

progress. He asked the Taliban to "stop spreading baseless remarks" and return to the negotiating table, adding "The Taliban does not have the guts for peace, they are spreading nonsense around."

There was no immediate response from the Taliban. Talib's comments came as the Taliban leadership has recently been in Iran and Russia for discussions on the negotiations, and as President Joe Biden's new administration has said it plans to review the peace agreement signed last February between the U.S. and the Taliban.

The Pentagon said last week that the Taliban's refusal to meet commitments to reduce violence in Afghanistan is raising questions about whether all U.S. troops will be able to leave by May as required under

the peace deal. Following discussions in Moscow on Friday, the head of the Taliban delegation, Sher Mohammed Abbas Stanikzai, said the group expects the U.S. to fulfill its pledge to withdraw all of its troops from Afghanistan by May.

The U.S. Pentagon announced in mid-January that the U.S. military has met its goal of reducing the number of troops in Afghanistan to about 2,500. Stanikzai has also demanded the resignation of Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, calling his administration an obstacle to peace, and a spike in violence has decreased optimism among Afghans the peace process will work. Meanwhile, the Afghan peace negotiating team praised President Biden's administration for its decision to review the U.S.-Tal-

iban peace deal, saying the deal favors the Taliban. Talib asked the new U.S. administration to withdraw its forces in a way that will prevent a security vacuum in the country and prevent the possibility of more militant attacks in Afghanistan and against the U.S. and other countries.

The Taliban on Sunday mistakenly fired two mortars in northern Faryab province killing two civilians and wounding 14 others, said the provincial police spokesman, Karim Yuresh. He said Afghan security checkpoints were targeted but the shells missed the checkpoints and hit the civilians.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid denied the group fired mortars toward civilians and accused Afghan forces of firing the mortars and causing the casualties. □

Wrangle over valuable art uncovered in Cypriot ghost town

By MENELAOS HADJICOSTIS
Associated Press

NICOSIA, Cyprus (AP) — The abstract figures of naked women gyrating to the rhythms of a five-piece band had shocked many people almost 60 years ago as they eyed the artwork for the first time on the walls of a popular restaurant-nightclub in Cyprus.

The valuable and very rare concrete relief by Christoforos Savva, Cyprus' most avant-garde artist of the 1960s, had lain hidden for decades in the underground recesses of the Perroquet nightclub in abandoned Varosha — an inaccessible ghost town that had been under Turkish military control since a 1974 war ethnically cleaved the island nation.

But with Varosha's controversial partial opening last November, the artwork has again come to light following a report by local newspaper Politis. Now, the man who says he commissioned the art from Savva is asking authorities for help to have it removed and transported to the country's national



In this Tuesday Oct. 20, 2020 shows a priceless and very rare concrete relief by Cyprus' most avant-garde artist of the 1960s, Christoforos Savva, appears on the wall of the defunct Perroquet nightclub in the abandoned ghost-town of Varosha in the breakaway, Turkish Cypriot north of ethnically divided Cyprus.

Associated Press

gallery for all to see.

Former Perroquet owner Avgerinos Nikitas, 93, a Greek Cypriot, has appealed to a committee composed of both Greek and Turkish Cypriots that's tasked with protecting Cyprus' cultural treasures on both sides of the divide to help remove the 13 sections.

"In return, I pledge to cede these pieces to the National Collection as a small contribution to Christoforos Savva's huge body of work," Nikitas said in a letter obtained by The Associated Press, addressed to the committee as well as Cyprus' education ministry. But the whole venture

could be derailed as the Greek Cypriot family that owns the Esperia Tower hotel that hosted the Perroquet club insist that the artwork legally belongs to them. They say they won't allow their "private property" to be removed and transferred and are warning of legal action.

Speaking on behalf of his family, Panayiotis Constantinou told the AP that their lawyer has advised them that the hotel, the club and everything inside it belongs to the family, regardless of the Savva artwork's cultural value.

"We respect and value culture, but this is private property about which we haven't been asked anything about removing it, and on top of that, someone else lays claim to it," Constantinou said.

Art historians credit Savva as one of the most influential artists of the time who brought the country's inward-looking, traditionalist art world into modernity in the years immediately after Cyprus gained independence from British colonial rule in 1960.

A painter and sculptor, Savva shifted away from the established, representational art styles by encompassing influences like cubism, which he picked up during his stays in London and Paris through the 1950s, into his voluminous artwork. He died in 1968. □

Mexico confirms at least 2 Guatemalan migrants among 19 dead

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Prosecutors in northern Mexico confirmed Saturday that at least two of the 19 people found shot to death and burned near the U.S. border were Guatemalan migrants. Two other victims among the four identified so far were Mexicans, they said.

The forensic results confirmed the fears of families in a rural Indigenous farming community in Guatemala who have said they lost contact with 13 migrants last week as they travelled toward the United States. The bodies were found Jan. 22 piled in a burned-out truck on a dirt road in the northern border state of Tamaulipas. The truck had 113 bullet impacts.

A burned-out SUV found nearby had previously been seen in the neighboring state of Nuevo Leon, at a spot where 66 migrants were caught by police and

immigration agents.

The Tamaulipas state prosecutors' office did not release the names of the four victims identified so far.

Of the 19 bodies examined by experts, 16 were found to be males, one was confirmed as female and two others were so badly burned their gender had not yet been determined. The killings revived memories of the 2010 massacre of 72 migrants near the town of San Fernando in the same gang-ridden state. A repeat of the 2010 massacre has long been one of the Mexican government's worst nightmares.

In 2019, President Andrés Manuel López Obrador said, "We do not want a repeat of horrendous, regrettable acts like San Fernando."

Relatives of migrants from Guatemala's province of San Marcos are so convinced that 13 of the 19

charred corpses were their loved ones that some of the families already erected traditional altars to the dead, with flowers and photographs.

Some of the relatives in Guatemala told of receiving calls from the migrant smuggler who took the group of 10 males and three female north, telling them their family members were dead. Relatives said they lost contact with the ground around Jan. 21.

It is unclear why the 19 people were slain. There have been instances in which drug cartels charge migrant smugglers for crossing their territory, and kidnap or kill migrants whose smugglers have not paid. Camargo, the area where the bodies were found, has long been the scene of turf battles between rival drug gangs as a major smuggling transit point for drugs and migrants. Orga-



Natalia Tomas keeps vigil next to an altar adorned with photos of her son Ivan Gudiel, in her home in Comitancillo, Guatemala, Wednesday, Jan. 27, 2021.

Associated Press

nized crime groups covet control of stretches of the border because they make money off everything that crosses the border.

The town is near the edge of territory historically controlled by factions of the Gulf cartel and in recent years a remnant of the Zetas known as the North-east cartel has tried to take

over.

In August 2010, Zetas cartel members stopped two tractor-trailers carrying dozens of mostly Central American migrants and took them to a ranch in San Fernando. After the migrants refused to work for the cartel, they were blindfolded, tied up on the floor and shot dead. □

LOCAL



ORANJESTAD - Exploring the underwater wonders is something you should definitely do during your stay in Aruba. The underwater world has everything to offer that makes a snorkel trip so exceptional; an impressive, colorful sea life with exotic fishes, turtles and beautiful coral reef. The historic shipwrecks, located on the Aruban seabed are also worth a visit. Aruba is known for its white beaches and blue oceans, which means there are many fascinating underwater spots, where you can take your snorkeling gear and we selected the top spots for you.

Tres Trapi

Tres Trapi means tree steps in Papiamentu, Papiamentu is together with Dutch the official language spoken on Aruba. The beach is called Tres Trapi because it is accessible by the tree steps carved into the rocks. Tres Trapi is a small rocky beach, located on the north-western side of the island, approximately 5 to 10 minute drive from Palm Beach. From the unique steps you can easily walk over the beach into the clear and turquoise blue ocean. While snorkeling you will encounter all kind of tropical fishes and sea stars. The kind of starfish you will find in the Aruban waters is the red cushion sea star. This is a starfish that is commonly found in the

Aruba's underwater wonderland

shallow waters of the Caribbean sea and if you are lucky during your snorkeling visit to Tres Trapi, you may come across one of the green sea turtles. Respect the animal, keep your distance and enjoy the view. Also remember; it is a once in a life time experience.

Antilla shipwreck

Antilla is a 400-foot-long long ship, built in 1939 in Hamburg, Germany. Antilla came to Aruba, because it had to find a neutral port. When Germany invaded the Netherlands on May 10, 1940, the crew decided to let their own ship sink, to prevent it from falling into the hands of the Dutch Navy. Antilla lies on its portside in Malmok bay, and the sunken world war two ship is now one of Aruba's most popular snorkeling and dive spots. However, the ship wreck can only be reached by boat. The ship is visible from the surface and during your snorkeling trip you be surrounded by hundreds of tropical fishes, but the ship wreck alone is already impressive enough.

Baby Beach

Baby beach; a white beach, with a crystal blue ocean. The beach is located on the southern part of the island. On the way to the famous beach, you will drive through the old capital of Aruba, San Nicolas. The old Aruban culture can be still felt and experienced here, so do not hesitate to get out of your car and walk around for a while. Baby beach is a child friendly beach, since it is shallow and the water has a pleasant temperature. The name therefore fits well with the beach. Baby beach is an excellent beach for snorkeling, especially if you want to go with small children, because the water remains shallow and there are still many underwater wonders to see. In the ocean there is an



area marked until where it is recommended to snorkel and on the beach you will find different facilities. It is a perfect beach to spend your day snorkeling and relaxing.

Mangel Halto

Mangel Halto beach is located in Savaneta, on the southern-west part of the island. The beach is different from the other beaches in Aruba; it is beach full of mangroves. You reach the beach by a bridge through the mangroves and then you will have several entrances to the sea. There are diverse spots where you can enjoy a perfect beach day, wooden stairs made to enter the water and a dock to sit on and enjoy the view. Mangel Halto is also worth a visit for the snorkeling experience. Inside the bay, the water is clear and you find many colorful fish. Outside the bay is a bit more challenging for beginners because of the wind and the waves, but the coral is alive and it is just like snorkel heaven. □





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Air Service Update Latin America: Airlift remains in place from Colombia and Panama Frequencies have been adjusted

ORANJESTAD — As announced earlier by the Government of Aruba, the border closure with Brazil has gone into effect since January 25, 2021, due to Brazil being a COVID-19 high risk area. As a result, airlines operating into Aruba from other Latin American countries have been affected and have seen the demand decrease. AUA Airport would like to clarify and inform that nonetheless airlift remains in place from Colombia and Panama.

Certain carriers from the

Latin America region have decided to temporarily suspend certain frequencies in the months of February and March 2021. Copa, currently operating three flights a week out of Panama City, Panama will operate two flight per week as of February 2021. Flights will then be on Mondays and on Saturdays. Avianca operating out of Bogota, Colombia will continue to operate 3 weekly flights during February 2021 on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. In March 2021, Avianca will decrease their frequency

and will operate on Fridays and Saturdays. Wingo confirmed their commitment today that they will continue to operate two weekly flights for the entire year 2021 but has yet to confirm if they will consider less frequencies for a temporary period, or not.

The closure of the border with Brazil, as expected, has influenced the frequencies of the Latin American carriers as these flights also carry passengers from the Brazilian market through their gateways in Colombia and



Panama on to Aruba. The Aruba Tourism Authority is monitoring this closely and will be activating, wherever possible, efforts to strength-

en the Latin America market. Aruba continues to be open for all markets except for Brazil, Venezuela and Peru at this time. □



Tej's World

ORANJESTAD — Aruba Today got a message from Tey Naik. He is a filmmaker from Maryland and has been to Aruba twice. Tej has travelled all over the world and did see to film a four episode series in November when he was here for nine days.

His videos highlight Palm Beach, Arikok National Park/Pool, Baby Beach, Renaissance Island (flamingo/iguana beach) and many other places while he was here with his friends. Have a look at the videos,

they highlight Aruba in an amazing way. The links for YouTube are as follows:

Episode 1: <https://youtu.be/ASwVFgDazp4>

Episode 2: https://youtu.be/ZKn-fLFN_Cw

Episode 3: <https://youtu.be/RbEmgYAkPCY>

Episode 4: <https://youtu.be/TD40Z2PBghY> □

Aruba to me

ORANJESTAD — You are back and we would like to portrait you! By inviting you to send us your favorite vacation picture while enjoying our Happy Island.

Complete the sentence: Aruba to me is Send your picture with that text (including your name and where you are from) to: news@arubatoday.com and we will publish your vacation memory. Isn't that a special way to keep your best moments alive? Please do note: By submitting photos, text or any other materials, you give permission to The Aruba Today Newspaper, Caribbean Speed Printers and any of its affiliated companies to use said materials, as well as names, likeness, etc. for promo-

tional purposes without compensation. Last but not least: check out our website, Instagram and Facebook page! Thank you for supporting our free newspaper, we strive to make you a happy reader every day again.

For today we received some amazing pictures from **Erica Dellogono**. She says:

"Aruba to us is the place we got married in 2021 surrounded by our closest family and friends after having to postpone our wedding from 2020. We got to ring in the New Year in hopes that 2021 would bring more positivity and love into our lives. Aruba is a place we will go back and visit for years to come." □





Aruba to me

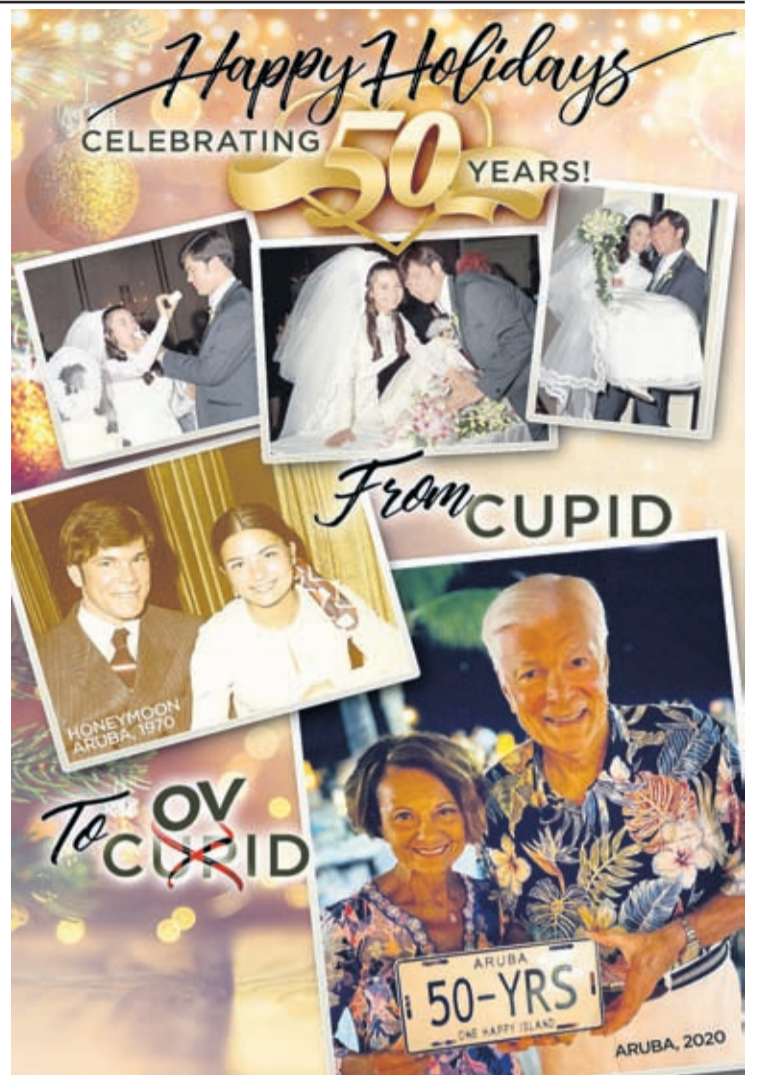
ORANJESTAD — “My name is Tony Racioppo and I'm from Manhasset, NY! Aruba to me is a second home. We came to Aruba for the first time in 1975 when there were only three major hotels! I remember driving past the Holiday Inn and the paved road ended and I thought where am I? All of a sudden we saw chickens, goats and even a few donkeys! Oh my!

We returned in 1981 and have been coming ever since. This is our 40th year in row! Over the years we have met, and become friends with many local residents. In my opinion, the Aruban people, are some of the nicest people I've ever met! There is nothing phony about them! What you see, the caring and thoughtfulness, is what you get. They have always made us feel so welcomed. We hope and pray that this wonderful island continues to prosper!"

Aruba to me

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Complete the sentence: Aruba to me is Send your picture with that text (including your name and where you are from) to: news@arubatoday.com and we will publish your vacation memory. Isn't that a special way to keep your best moments alive? Please do note: By submitting photos, text or any other materials, you give permission to The Aruba Today Newspaper, Caribbean Speed Printers and any of its affiliated companies to use said materials, as well as names, likeness, etc. for promotional purposes without compensation. Last but not least: check out our website, Instagram and Facebook page! Thank you for supporting our free newspaper, we strive to make you a happy reader every day again. Have a look at this great message and images



It has been quite a journey over the past half century. We honeymooned in Aruba in January of 1970- when there was just one large hotel on the island. We have watched it grow over the past 50 years and had hoped to be there with our children and grandchildren to celebrate our 50th wedding anniversary in August. Because of Covid- it was not to be. In fact, the borders closed and we had to leave- in March- just hours after taking the picture with the license plate at **Barefoot Restaurant**.

The Sagamore- on Lake George- became the special place for us to celebrate together- without leaving New York State.

The pandemic has changed many things, but it has not changed the enduring friends who have received our photo greetings for 50 years. May 2021 be a better year for all of us. We looking forward to returning to **One Happy Island!**

Mary and Don

shared with us by **Mary and Don Alhart** from Pittsford:

“I enclose a copy of this year's Holiday Greeting Card which describes our love affair with Aruba—for more than a half century. As you can see- we honeymooned there in 1970. You carried an article in the paper when we celebrated our 40th Wedding Anniversary in Aruba. (March, 2010) We plan to return March 5-20- at the Marriott Surf Club and finish the celebration that was interrupted last March.”

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How to make good on your resolution to pay off debt in 2021

By **JACKIE VELING** of **Nerd-Wallet**

If you have high-interest consumer debt, getting control of your money in the new year might sound overwhelming.

Most Americans say the COVID-19 outbreak has caused financial stress, according to a survey released in October by the National Endowment for Financial Education, with 30% listing debt as their top stressor.

Despite the pandemic, you can still pay down your debt with the right plan. Here's how.

CONFRONT YOUR DEBT

The first step is simple, but it can be the hardest: You have to face the problem. Angela Moore, a Miami-based certified financial planner and founder of Modern Money Advisor, which offers virtual advising and education for consumers, says it's common for her clients to know they're in debt but not know how much.

She recommends compiling your debt onto one document or spreadsheet, listing all balances, minimum payments and interest rates.

Though the task is daunting, most of her clients feel relief once it's finished.

"Debt is an emotional burden," she says, "but a lot of times that overwhelm goes



In this July 18, 2012, file photo, a pedestrian passes credit card logos posted on a downtown storefront in Atlanta.

away once you have clarity."

COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR LENDERS

After listing your debt, it's time to get on the phone with your creditors.

Ask for a temporarily lowered interest rate, reduced monthly payment or waived late fees. Make sure to explain how the pandemic has influenced your finances.

Most creditors will be willing to work with you, says Dan Herron, a California-based CFP at Elemental Wealth

Advisors. "It doesn't hurt to say, 'I'm still trying to do the right thing, I'm still trying to make payments. Where can we meet in the middle?'" he says. Any break you get, take that money and apply it to your debt. If you need help negotiating, contact a credit counselor at a reputable non-profit organization, like the National Foundation for Credit Counseling. Counselors have relationships with creditors and can negotiate on your behalf. Services are typically free for

those experiencing financial difficulties due to COVID-19.

CONSIDER CONSOLIDATING

If you have multiple types of debt, such as loans, credit cards and medical bills, you may want to take out an unsecured personal loan to consolidate it into one monthly payment.

A consolidation loan is a good idea only if you can qualify for a lower interest rate than those on your current debts. Some lenders have tightened their

approval standards in the pandemic, but borrowers with good to excellent credit (690 FICO or higher) should have a good shot.

Look for a lender that specializes in debt consolidation and offers perks like direct payments to creditors or rate discounts for automated payments.

If you have credit card debt, you could apply for a balance transfer card. Though these cards typically charge a 3% to 5% fee, they offer an introductory 0% interest period, so all payments go toward your principal, which helps you pay off debt faster.

You'll likely need good credit to qualify.

Charles Ho, a California-based CFP and founder of Legacy Builders Financial, urges caution for some consumers. Though consolidation tools can save money, they also free up your credit cards for more spending.

"It might make mathematical sense to consolidate your loans, but the math is meaningless if we don't account for our behavior and end up almost doubling our debt," he says.

PICK A STRATEGY AND STICK TO IT

If you choose not to consolidate, there are two common methods for approaching debt payoff: the snowball or avalanche. □

Associated Press

Toys R Us retrenches again, shutter its last 2 US stores

By **ANNE D'INNOCENZIO**
NEW YORK (AP) — Toys R Us is retrenching once again. The only two Toys R Us stores that opened in November 2019 as part of a small U.S. comeback attempt by the iconic toy chain have now closed.

The Toys R Us store at the Galleria mall in Houston shuttered on Jan. 15, while one at the Garden State Plaza in Paramus, New Jersey, closed on Tuesday, according Tru Kids, a new entity formed when it acquired Toys R Us' intellectual property during its liquidation in 2018.

The moves come as physical stores, particularly mall-

based locations, have been hurt by weak customer traffic amid the pandemic.

The Toys R Us website is still in operation.

"As a result of COVID, we made the strategic decision to pivot our store strategy to new locations and platforms that have better traffic," Tru Kids said in an emailed statement Friday. "Consumer demand in the toy category and for Toys R Us remains strong and we will continue to invest in the channels where the customer wants to experience our brand."

The two shuttered locations were about 6,500 square

feet — about one-seventh of the size of the old Toys R Us stores and emphasized hands-on experiences. Employees unwrapped toys, for instance, so that kids could try them out.

During a visit to the New Jersey store in late 2019, kids shot Nerf blasters and sat in a circle for story time while Geoffrey, the chain's mascot, roamed around. Such experiences are now shunned at a time when shoppers have to abide by social-distancing rules.

Tru Kids says that outside of the U.S., it operates Toys R Us, and Babies R Us branded stores and e-commerce sites through licensing part-



In this Dec. 9, 2019, file photo a girl hugs the Toys R Us mascot, Geoffrey, at the new store at a mall in Paramus, N.J.

Associated Press

ners in more than 25 countries in Asia, Europe, Africa and the Middle East.

Bloomberg News first reported the news of the store closures. □

Fight The Man: What GameStop's surge says about online mobs

AP Technology Writers

It's a fable for our times: Small-time investors band together to take down greedy Wall Street hedge funds using the stock of a troubled video-game store. But the revolt of online stock-traders suggests much more. The internet is shifting society's balance of power in unanticipated ways. And the same tools that empower the little guy — allowing people to organize quickly and seemingly out of nowhere, troll powerful institutions and unleash chaos — can also give rise to extremist mobs waging harassment campaigns or the Jan. 6 riot at the Capitol.

In the world of pseudonymous internet message boards, pranks-gone-wild and logic turned upside down amid a global pandemic, revolts come in all shapes, sizes and aims. Last week they gave us the Great GameStop Stock Uprising. Who knows what this week will bring.

One thing for sure: we'll be seeing more of it. More and more of us have learned to game the system, whether for a noble cause or, as they say, "for the lulz." If a



Pedestrians pass a GameStop store on 14th Street at Union Square, Thursday, Jan. 28, 2021, in the Manhattan borough of New York.

Associated Press

meme of Bernie Sanders in mittens can distract us amid a presidential inauguration and a Reddit message board can send Wall Street big shots running in panic, perhaps some good can come out of this, too. Right?

"The internet can democratize access, upsetting power dynamics between the people and traditional institutions," tweeted Tiffany

C. Li, a law professor and tech attorney focusing on privacy and technology platform governance. With GameStop, she added in an interview Friday, the goal was to upset the interests of a few large hedge funds.

"But in other places the goal can be more nefarious. Online spaces are being used to radicalize people toward extremism,

to plan hate crimes and attacks," she said. "The internet isn't really the villain or the hero."

Jason Wilkinson had dabbled in stocks but took a deeper dive into the Reddit forum WallStreetBets after losing his job at a tech company in the pandemic. The 30-year-old New York City resident started trading between other part-time jobs doing motorcycle

delivery and sharpening knives, and started buying shares in GameStop back in November.

"I went from a \$9,000 position up to about \$30,000 as of last night. Today I lost 10 grand," he said Thursday. "I didn't sell. I'm going to hold. It's been an emotional week, let's say that."

As with many crowd movements, it was hard to trace where it all started, though there were at least a few high-profile instigators. Among them was Roaring Kitty, a YouTube personality from a Boston suburb who became a legendary fixture on the Reddit forum, expressing an early interest in buying GameStop shares and inspiring a growing legion of followers to pore through its financials.

The Reddit-based investors used the chat platform Discord to fire each other up and the trading app Robinhood to buy shares with a few clicks on their smartphones. They soon found a shared enemy in hedge fund managers who tried to short the stock, encouraging each other to keep buying GameStop and push it ever higher — "to the moon." □

U.N. chief calls for regulating social media companies



Norwegian Borge Brende, left, President and Member of the Managing Board of the World Economic Forum (WEF) speaks U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres via videolink during the Davos Forum, in Cologny near Geneva, Switzerland, Monday, Jan. 25, 2021.

Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The United Nations chief called Thursday for global rules to regulate powerful social media companies like Twitter and Facebook. Secretary-General Antonio

Guterres said he believes it shouldn't be a company that has the power to decide whether, for example, then president Donald Trump's Twitter account should be closed, as a

questioner asked. Rather, he said, a "mechanism" should be created "in which there is a regulatory framework with rules that allow for that to be done in line with law."

"I do not think that we can live in a world where too much power is given to a reduced number of companies," Guterres stressed at a news conference.

Earlier this month, Twitter ended Trump's nearly 12-year run and shuttered his account, severing an instant line of communication to his 89 million followers that was a hallmark of his presidency. Facebook and Instagram suspended Trump.

Twitter said Trump's tweets could incite violence following the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol by his supporters. Conserva-

tives accused the companies of censorship and violating the First Amendment's right to free speech. Guterres said he is "particularly worried" about the power of social media companies.

He pointed to "the volume of information that is being gathered about each one of us, the lack of control we have about ... the data related to ourselves, the fact that that data can be used not only for commercial purposes to sell to advertising companies ... but also to change our behavior, and the risks of that to be used also from a political point of view for the control of citizens in countries."

Guterres said this "requires a serious discussion" and that is one of the objectives of his "Roadmap for Digital Cooperation" launched

last June.

The roadmap's aim is to promote "a safer, more equitable digital world."

It calls for action in eight areas including achieving universal connectivity to the Internet by 2030, "promoting trust and security in the digital environment" and "building a more effective architecture for digital cooperation."

"Digital technology issues are too often low on political agendas," it says.

Among the roadmap's provisions is a call for strengthening the Internet Governance Forum, which bring people from various groups in the public and private sector together to discuss public policy issues related to the Internet, "in order to make it more responsive and relevant to current digital issues." □

Maine company successfully launches prototype rocket

By PATRICK WHITTLE
Associated Press

BRUNSWICK, Maine (AP) — A Maine company that's developing a rocket to propel small satellites into space passed its first major test on Sunday.

Brunswick-based bluShift Aerospace launched a 20-foot (6-meter) prototype rocket, hitting an altitude of a little more than 4,000 feet (1,219 meters) in a first run designed to test the rocket's propulsion and control systems.

It carried a science project by Falmouth High School students that will measure flight metrics such as barometric pressure, a special alloy that's being tested by a New Hampshire company — and a Dutch dessert called stroomwafel, in an homage to its Amsterdam-based parent company. Organizers of the launch said the items were included to demonstrate the inclusion of a small payload. The company, which launched from the northern Maine town of Limestone, the site of the former Loring Air Force Base, is one of dozens racing to find affordable ways to launch so-called nano satellites. Some of them, called Cube-Sats, can be as small as 10 centimeters by 10 centimeters.

Sascha Deri, chief executive officer of bluShift, said the company is banking on becoming a quicker, more efficient way of transporting satellites to space. "There's a lot of companies out there that are like freight trains to space," Deri said. "We are going to be

the Uber to space, where we carry one, two or three payloads profitably." Another aspect that makes bluShift's rocket different is its hybrid propulsion system. It relies on a solid fuel and a liquid oxidizer passing either through or around the solid fuel; the result is a simpler, more affordable system than a liquid fuel-only rocket, said spokesperson Seth Lockman. The fuel is a proprietary biofuel blend sourced from farms, Deri said.

"It's a very nontoxic fuel, I like to say that I could give it to either one of my little daughters. Nothing bad would happen to them, I



This Jan. 31, 2021 image provided by bluShift Aerospace shows The Knack Factory in Limestone, Maine, where an unmanned rocket lifts off in a test run.

Associated Press

swear," he said. "So it's very much nontoxic. It's carbon neutral." The goal is to create a small rocket that could launch a 30-kilogram (66-pound) payload into low-Earth orbit, more than 100 miles (160 kilometers) above Earth's surface. Lockman said orbit could be possible by 2024.

The company has spent \$800,000 on research and development, with some of the money coming from NASA. □

Conceptis Sudoku By Dave Green

	2	3						
				4		1		7
	7		9		1			8
		7	1	2	8	9		
	4			9			2	
		5	4	3	6	7		
6			2		9		7	
7		4		6				
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Questlove uncovers 'Black Woodstock' in his hit Sundance doc

By **JAKE COYLE**

NEW YORK (AP) — Questlove responded with incredulous disbelief when he was first told about the footage.

A landmark 1969 Harlem concert series that he hadn't heard of? With Stevie Wonder? With Nina Simone? With Sly and the Family Stone, B.B. King and the Staples Singers?

"I was like, 'Yeah, right.' I know everything that musically happened during that time period and I've never heard of this in my life. 'Get out of here,'" Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson recalled in an interview. "Then they came back and showed me the footage and I was just jaw-dropped."

That was the beginning of what would become "Summer of Soul (...or When the Revolution Could Not Be Televised)," a concert-film time-capsule of a historic but largely forgotten festival. Known as "Black Woodstock," the festival occurred during the same summer as Woodstock — and just 100 miles away — but received far less attention.

"Summer of Soul," Questlove's directorial debut, finally unearths a little-seen landmark musical event. It debuted Thursday night at the Sundance Film Festival where it spawned immediate acclaim and countless at-home dance parties for virtual festivalgoers — a party Questlove extended



Musician and DJ Questlove attends the Planned Parenthood of New York City spring gala benefit on May 1, 2019, in New York.

with a live-streamed after-party DJ set.

As the Roots drummer, the "Tonight" show bandleader, an in-demand producer and a self-declared "music nerd," Questlove's ubiquitous presence in music has often bled into film projects. But "Summer of Soul" is his first time directing — his first "jawn," as he labels it, using Philadelphia slang — even if he never sought it out.

"You're asking if this was on my bucket-list bingo card?" says Questlove smiling over Zoom.

"I was thinking in a more

seasoned director's hands, this could change someone's life," he says. "I knew I was watching something special. But I got over my fear. I often will go through impostor syndrome. I realized now it's my chance to change someone's life and tell a story that was almost erased."

Over six Sundays in 1969, more than 300,000 gathered in Harlem's Mt. Morris Park for a celebration of soul, gospel, funk and, most of all of Black identity at a pivotal point in African American culture. The Har-

lem Cultural Festival — "like a rose coming through the concrete" one attendee remembers — came a year after Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination. Rev. Jesse Jackson is seen speaking passionately from the stage: "When we're more concerned about the moon than men, somebody better wake up."

The concerts were filmed by the television veteran Hal Tulchin, but he found that no networks or Hollywood producers were interested in his 40 hours of footage. Tulchin kept trying

to find the footage a home until his death in 2017.

"Literally, had we let a few months more go by, a lot of this footage would have been discarded in the trash," says Questlove. "Hal Tulchin had been trying to sell this footage for years and years and decades and decades. Nobody would take the bait. His wife was like: I know some of his stuff is in the basement but I'm about to clear the basement and get rid of it. Who knew that you could get Stevie Wonder for so cheap, or Sly and the Family Stone?"

The material is indeed jaw-dropping. Simone, perhaps for the first time, performs "To Be Young, Gifted and Black." Sly and the Family Stone, the only act to play both Woodstock and Harlem in 1969, plays "I Want to Take You Higher." Hugh Masekela does "Grazing in the Grass." Mahalia Jackson and Mavis Staples sing an astonishing gospel duet. "The more I watched it, especially with the gospel performances, that's just some of the prime, documented, raw gospel performances I've ever seen in my lifetime," says Questlove. "I was just like: Yo, is it that easy just to erase our history? Is it that easy, in a snap? Could it just be lost? That one scene, alone, with Mahalia Jackson and Mavis Staples, that almost was in the trash. □"

Associated Press

Country Hall of Famer, actor Kris Kristofferson has retired



Singer Kris Kristofferson performs at the Glastonbury music festival at Worthy Farm, in Somerset, England, on June 23, 2017.

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Grammy-winning singer-songwriter Kris Kristofferson has announced his retirement after five decades and named a manager for his estate.

A press release issued Wednesday said that the 84-year-old actor and singer actually retired last year and his son, John, stepped in to oversee his father's business, including special projects and his record label KK Records. His estate will be managed by Morris Higham Management, which also manages clients including Kenny Chesney,

Barbara and Louise Mandrell and the Roger Miller estate.

Kristofferson, an Oxford scholar from Texas, brought introspective and poetic lyrics to country music with songs like "Sunday Mornin' Comin' Down" and "Me and Bobby McGee" and was a member of the supergroup The Highwaymen. He has starred in 70 films and earned a Golden Globe for his performance in "A Star is Born."

He was inducted to the Country Music Hall of Fame and was awarded the Johnny Mercer Award from

the Songwriter Hall of Fame. He also received a lifetime achievement award from the Recording Academy. As for retiring, the release said Kristofferson will celebrate his 85th birthday this June with several special projects. □

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2	9	5	4	3	6	7	8	1
6	5	8	2	1	9	3	7	4
7	1	4	5	6	3	8	9	2
9	3	2	8	7	4	5	1	6

Difficulty Level ★ 2/01

Leonard, Clippers pull away from Knicks for 129-115 win

By **BRIAN MAHONEY**
AP Basketball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Not even the NBA's leading defensive team could slow down the surging Los Angeles Clippers.

Kawhi Leonard scored 28 points and the Clippers rang up the highest point total of the season against the New York Knicks on Sunday, winning 129-115 for their 10th victory in 11 games.

The Clippers shredded the NBA leaders in fewest points per game allowed to break away after leading by one at halftime. Even playing without two starters, they surpassed the 102.7 points per game the Knicks had been allowing with their first basket of the final quarter and kept pouring it on in their third straight victory.

"We're just a pretty good offensive team," Paul George said.

"We share the ball, we move it, we look for the open man, we emphasize passing up good shots for great ones and I think we do a pretty good job of doing that," he said.

Reggie Jackson added 18 points and George had 17 for the Clippers, who made 17 3-pointers and shot 54% overall against a Knicks team that led the league in that category as well while improving to 16-5.

"It's been a good ride so far and I think we've got something special going on over there," Clippers forward Marcus Morris said.

Julius Randle had 27 points and 12 rebounds for the Knicks. Rookie Immanuel Quickley added 25 points and RJ Barrett added 23, but scoring wasn't the problem for a Knicks team that had been limiting opponents to 42.6% shooting.

"I thought offensively it was good. Defensively it's not what we would have liked," Knicks coach Tom Thibodeau said.

The game's start time was moved up four hours by the NBA to 1 p.m., though neither that nor the Knicks' good early shooting seemed to bother the Clippers. New York made eight

of its first 10 shots and led for a good part of the first half before the Clippers took a 66-65 edge into the break.

Los Angeles came back from the locker room with seven straight points and didn't slow down the rest of the third quarter. Leonard and Jackson each scored 10 points in the period, when the Clippers made five 3-pointers and scored 35 points, taking a 101-91 lead to the fourth.

Quickley scored eight straight points to cut a 10-point lead to 105-103, but the Clippers answered with nine in a row to open a 114-103 advantage on Leonard's basket midway through the period. An 8-0 run later in the fourth made it a 15-point game.

TIP-INS



Los Angeles Clippers small forward Kawhi Leonard (2) controls the ball against New York Knicks center Taj Gibson (67) during the first half of an NBA basketball game Sunday, Jan. 31, 2021, in New York.

Associated Press

Clippers: Nicolas Batum sat out with a left groin injury. Patrick Patterson started and scored 13 points, going 5 for 5 from the field with three 3-pointers. ... Lou Wil-

liams' 250th career game with at least five assists off the bench surpassed J.J. Barea for the most such games in NBA history.

Knicks: The Knicks' previ-

ous high for points allowed was 121 to Indiana in their season opener. ... Reggie Bullock, who missed the last three games with a sore neck, returned to the starting lineup and scored eight points. ... C Nerlens Noel was scratched shortly before the game with a sore left groin.

GET IN THE GAME

Thibodeau supports Dennis Smith Jr.'s request to play for the Knicks' G League affiliate to get some needed work. The former lottery pick acquired two years ago in the deal that sent Kristaps Porzingis to Dallas has appeared in just three games this season.

"His attitude has been very positive. He's worked hard in practice," Thibodeau said. □

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Brady, Mahomes prepare for 5th matchup after splitting 1st 4

By **JOSH DUBOW**

There was a regular-season shootout and a playoff masterpiece the first season that Patrick Mahomes and Tom Brady met on a football field.

Brady came out ahead in those two meetings, but Mahomes has gotten the edge the past two times they met.

Now as they are set to meet on football's biggest stage of the Super Bowl, it's time to look back at those first four games when they shared a field.

While their teams split those contests, Mahomes has put up the better numbers with his 109.2 passer rating and 11-3 touchdown to interception ratio outpacing Brady's 86 rating with six TDs and five interceptions.

But the matchup features the most accomplished quarterback ever to play the game who is still thriving at age 43 in Brady against the young gun who is re-writing record books at age 25.

"Could you imagine if Michael Jordan had gotten his team to the (NBA) Finals



In this Nov. 29, 2020, file photo, Tampa Bay Buccaneers quarterback Tom Brady (12) congratulates Kansas City Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes (15) after their NFL football game in Tampa, Fla. Associated Press

when he was older against a young LeBron James?" CBS game analyst Tony Romo said. "It would be the greatest thing in the history of sports. ... I think we actually might have that game." Here's a look at the past meetings between Brady and Mahomes:

Chiefs 27, Bucs 24 at Tampa, Nov. 29, 2020: Mahomes and Tyreek Hill jumped all over Tampa Bay early with TD passes of 75 and 44 yards in the first quarter. Hill had seven catches for 203 yards in the first period, the third-most yards in any quarter for a player in the

past 40 years. Mahomes added a 20-yard TD pass to Hill in the third quarter to make it a 17-point game. Mahomes threw for 462 yards and three TDs, with Hill leading the way with 13 catches for 269 yards. Brady threw two TD passes in the fourth quarter to cut

the deficit to three points with 4:10 to play, but Mahomes then ran for two first downs and converted another on a third-down pass to Hill that iced the game.

"I learned a long time ago, you don't give Tom Brady another shot," Chiefs coach Andy Reid said. "That's why he's the G.O.A.T. So, don't give them the ball back. That was the mindset there."

Chiefs 23, Patriots 16 at New England, Dec. 8, 2019: Mahomes and the Chiefs clinched the AFC West and snapped New England's 21-game home winning streak. Mahomes injured his hand on the second drive of the game yet finished with 283 yards passing and a TD. Brady struggled, going 19 of 36 for 169 yards, a touchdown and interception. Bashaud Bree-land sealed the win when he knocked away Brady's fourth-down pass attempt to Julian Edelman in the end zone with just over a minute to play.

"You want to beat the best," Mahomes said. □

Twins finalize \$10.5M, 1-year deal with SS Andrelton Simmons

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — The Minnesota Twins finalized an \$10.5 million, one-year contract on Sunday with shortstop Andrelton Simmons, enhancing their infield defense for 2021 as they seek a third straight AL Central division title and attempt to stop their record postseason losing streak.

Simmons agreed to the deal earlier in the week. The four-time Gold Glove award winner will allow Jorge Polanco to move to second base and form a strong tandem on the

left side with third baseman Josh Donaldson. The 31-year-old Simmons played the last five seasons with the Los Angeles Angels.

Ankle injuries have sidelined the Curacao native for stretches in each of the last three years. Since 2012, his rookie season with the Atlanta Braves, Simmons leads all players in baseball in two key defensive metrics: runs saved (191) and ultimate zone rating (113.1).

Simmons batted .297 in 30 games during the pan-

demic-shortened season and is a career .269 hitter in nine years with Atlanta and the Angels.

The Twins, who have lost 18 consecutive postseason games, signed starting pitcher J.A. Happ and relief pitcher Hansel Robles to supplement their roster. Left fielder Eddie Rosario and relief pitcher Trevor May have joined other teams. Designated hitter Nelson Cruz and starting pitcher Jake Odorizzi are the Minnesota's most prominent free agents who remain unsigned. □



In this Wednesday, March 4, 2020 file photo, Los Angeles Angels' Andrelton Simmons throws the ball against the Seattle Mariners during the second inning of a spring training baseball game in Tempe, Ariz.

Associated Press